7:Nicolaisen E-5 (1951-1962) 1963 MS25 Tuareg MS25

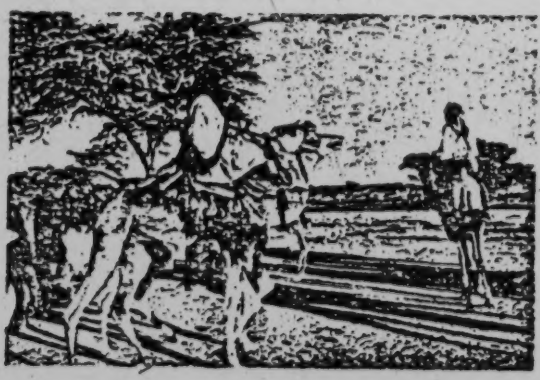

Fig. 82a. Tuareg performing the ceremonial camel-ride on the first wedding day. The women stand in the shade of the *afagay* acacia and sing and drum while the men ride around them two by two. Southern Ayr, *Iwwiden*.

Boys and girls may play together, but there is a tendency for them to separate in their games. Boys' games centre round camels, while the games of girls centre round the family life of the tent and certain domestic tasks. But though camels are never tended by women, girls also make camel figures from cotton stuffed with hay, though they do not make figures to represent goats and donkeys which among vassals are connected with women and tended by them. The emphasis on camels in girl's games is due to the fact that camels have important functions in social life as described briefly below.

Tuareg initiation consists in the adoption of the veil by young men, and a similar piece of cotton used as a head-cloth by young women. The veil is adopted by men when 16–18 years old, the head-cloth by women somewhat earlier shortly after the first menstruation, or at marriage. At initiation the young man is presented with a sword, and if he does not already possess a riding camel with a saddle it will be given him on this occasion by his father, perhaps by his mother's brother. The young man is now a warrior and a camel man, and he will take part in nightly gatherings of young people of both sexes to sing and make music. These nightly gatherings are very often followed by love-making, and the riding camel and the ability of the young man as a rider play a great part for his success in love. The beauty of the riding camel, its saddle gear, and the way it is ridden are all to some extent considered qualities of the rider. Thus when women at nightly gatherings praise young men in their songs they will also praise the riding camels. And when a girl likes a young man she will present him with coloured skin bags, reins, embroidered saddle clothes, and similar objects to be used as ornaments for his riding camel.

In a ceremonial ride termed *ihuton* (*ihgan* in Ayr), which is performed at weddings and certain other feasts, the young men have a particular opportunity to display the beauty of their camels and their own ability as riders. The ride takes place not far from the wedding tent on a level sandy place where the women gather to sing and drum, while the men dressed in their finest clothes ride their ornamented camels to and fro past the women, who praise the beautiful camels and the skilled riders by their songs, their music, and by shrill cheers. In this ceremonial ride the emphasis is not so much on such